

INTRODUCTION TO THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST ASSOCIATION



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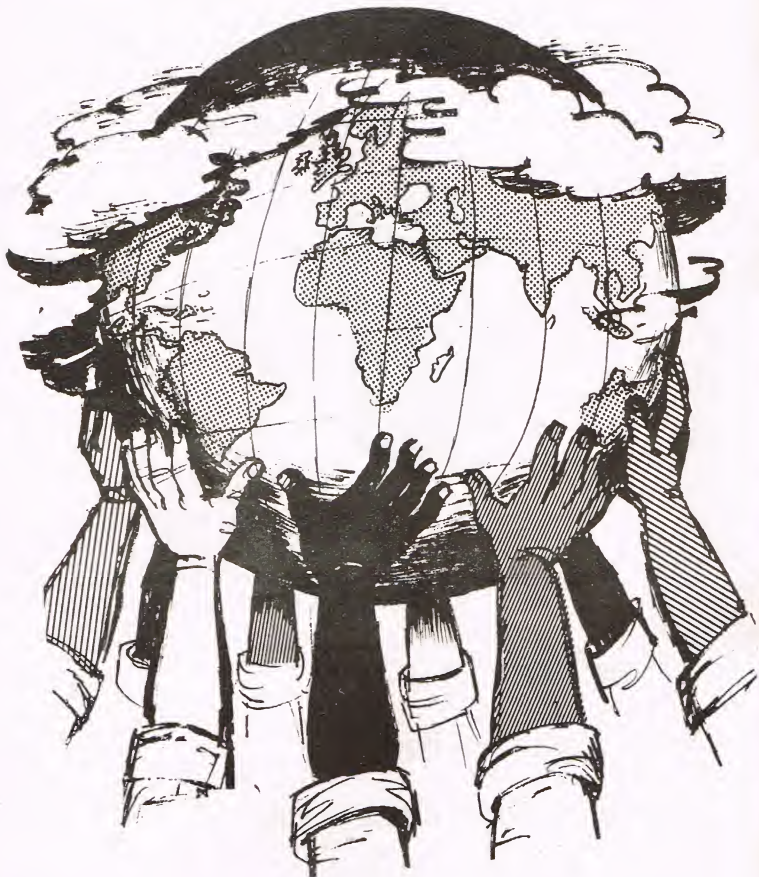
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"We are going to inherit the earth.

The bourgeoisie may blast and bomb its own world before it finally leaves the stage of history. We are not afraid of ruins.

We who built the Cities and ploughed the Prairies can build again only better next time.

We carry a new world, here in our hearts. That world is growing this minute."



1. INTRODUCTION

A New World In Our Hearts

This pamphlet is about the basis on which we, the Anarchist Communist Association, organise.

The pamphlet consists of three parts:

- (1) "What We Stand For" (our statement of "aims and principles").
- (2) "What Is Anarchist Communism?" which first appeared as an article in our paper Bread & Roses.
- (3) The constitution of the ACA.

The statement "What We Stand For" is quite short. People who are thinking of joining the ACA aren't expected to dot every i and cross every t, but are expected to agree with the gist of it.

"What Is Anarchist Communism?" is a bit longer. It's not as basic as "What We Stand For", but you would expect people in the ACA to agree with the better part of it.

The third part, the constitution -- it should be said that we are probably more flexible than (or less well organised than) it looks like on paper.

Durruti said it better. "We carry a new world, here in our hearts. That world is growing this minute."

A.C.A. August 1979

Revolution Not Reform

The courts and parliament, police and army, exist to protect the interests of the rich and powerful.

We know from experience that it is useless to try and reform these institutions by electing representatives to parliament. Neither can they be captured and used in our interests after a revolution. Both simply lead to swapping one form of exploitation for another.

They need to be destroyed completely and immediately replaced with workers' and community councils. If this is to be achieved, we will need to take up arms to defend ourselves.



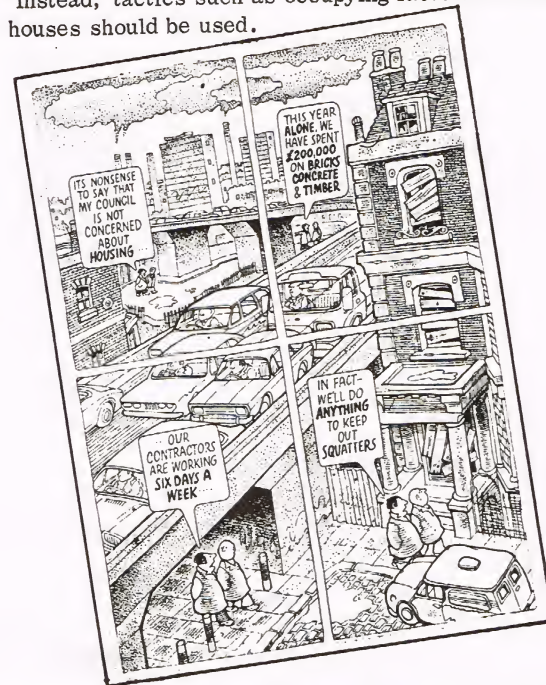
A Revolution Of Everyday Life

Relationships now are based on domination and submission: bosses over workers, men over women, adults over children.

We seek to change all of this. We seek not just an economic revolution but one that also frees us in our social and personal relationships.

Direct Action

The way to build for revolution is through direct action. This means ignoring official ways of protesting such as general elections. Instead, tactics such as occupying factories and squatting empty houses should be used.



It also means making sure that every struggle is controlled by the people concerned and not, for example, by full-time party or union officials.

Internationalism

Exploitation not only happens in this country. Ordinary people are exploited throughout the world. In the "communist" world as much as in the "free" world.

The experience of every previous revolution shows that there can be no successful revolution in one country alone and that we need to unite with ordinary people everywhere if we are to be free.



Organisation

If we want to achieve a free classless society, we must organise in the same way.

The ACA rejects equally the idea of creating a party in which a central committee hands down orders to the members and also the dis-organisation of other anarchist groups. Our organisation aims to provide an alternative to both.

Organisation is necessary because it breaks down our individual isolation, helps us to share our experiences, and to co-ordinate our activities. In this way, each thread of resistance can be gradually woven into a tapestry of revolution and freedom.



3. WHAT IS ANARCHIST COMMUNISM ?

Most people realize that the system under which we live is rotten to the core. It doesn't matter which party is in power, the rich and powerful stay rich and powerful while the rest of us are forced to slave away long hours (at work and in the home) in boring, soul-destroying jobs to get basic needs and maybe a few comforts.

No Voice

Decisions that affect our lives are nearly always taken from above with the result that much of what goes on (the building of roads, office blocks, airports, nuclear power stations, for example) is directly against our interests and insensitive to our needs as human beings. Dangerous jobs are often made even more dangerous because the people giving us the orders either don't know or don't care about the conditions we're working in.



Complete Control

From the moment we're born we become cogs in a relentless brutal machine whose only purpose is to provide wealth and comfort for a small privileged minority -- the bosses. Because these bosses control the economy (through their ownership/control of property and of the factories and machines that produce goods) they are able to control every aspect of our lives through science, education, and especially the media (press, radio and television).



We are led to believe that there is no alternative to the present system of things and that our best bet is to tighten our belts and work harder to provide a bigger cake for the bosses in the hope of picking up bigger crumbs for ourselves. That's life! We can either like it or lump it.

Anarchism Says...

Sod this for a laugh! Anarchists believe that the struggle for a

better life must involve the destruction of the present system of society and its replacement by a stateless society based on freedom, equality and direct control over our own lives. This means doing away with all forms of domination -- adults over children, men over women, bosses over workers, the young over the elderly and so on.

It also means an end to the wastefulness of production for profit. Children will no longer starve to death in one part of the world while in another large quantities of food are left to rot. In an anarchist society goods will be produced and distributed to the needs of everyone.



Direct Democracy

In the workplace itself methods used and hours worked will be decided collectively by the workers concerned. There will be no bureaucrats sitting behind desks giving orders from on high. Similarly decisions affecting the community -- the planning of schools, recreational facilities, housing, transport etc. -- will be made by everyone in the community.

The whole thing will be co-ordinated not by a central parliament of well-off politicians doing what they want and representing their interests but by workplace and community councils. These will consist of ordinary people elected by their neighbours and fellow-workers.

These people will not be able to make decisions on behalf of everyone else -- their role will be to carry out whatever tasks are delegated to them by the people who elect them. They will have to account for themselves regularly and can be sacked and replaced if people consider they are not doing their job properly.

Action

It is through direct action that people realise the possibilities and gain confidence and experience to control their own lives. Direct action can take many forms -- wildcat strikes, occupations of factories, colleges, town halls etc., sabotage and so on.



In Italy people have successfully reduced the prices of food in supermarkets by getting together and collectively refusing to pay the amount demanded. In France large groups of people travelling on trains have refused to pay their fares and got away with it.

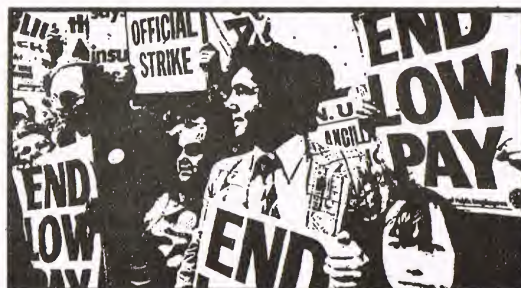
Direct democracy is not going through the proper channels -- these have already been proved too slow and ineffective. It is large numbers of people uniting in action to defend their common interests. This is the best way to keep our struggles independent and completely under our control.

Anarchy For The U.K.?

We find our oppressors in every country in the world. We must fight for our freedom in uniting with the working people of all nations. There can be no true revolution in one country alone.

The A.C.A

The Anarchist Communist Association is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists who want to develop anarchism as a living and decisive force. We do not seek power for ourselves, nor do we wish to control workers' struggles, and we shall oppose any groups or parties that try and use these struggles for their own ends.



We see the need for those who share a common oppression (e.g. gays, women, blacks) to organise autonomously, but we realise our immediate oppression. We must link our struggles together.

The role of our organisation is in the action of spreading our ideas and spreading our ideas through action. We want to publicise and help analyse examples of direct action and self-management. Whenever possible we also give practical support (with no strings attached).

Our organisation also helps us to break down our own individual isolation, to share our experiences and to link them together.

Thus each thread of resistance is gradually woven into a tapestry of revolution and freedom.

THE REVOLUTION STARTS NOW.

AN ANARCHIST ALTERNATIVE

The Anarchist Communist Association, of which I am a member, has devoted huge amounts of energy into developing a truly democratic anarchist structure on a national and local level. This has not been easy, but it has been worth it.

So many anarchists talk about the theory of delegation, recallability, accountability, rotation of responsibility and the alternatives to hierarchical political structures, but few try to put them into practice or try to explore the advantages and difficulties in practice. Previous attempts at national federations have merely been talking shops and have soon collapsed.

Only the ACA, and possibly Solidarity, has seriously attempted to explore what anarchist democratic structure means in practice and not surprisingly only those two groups have survived to develop anarchism further and spread it beyond the self-conscious affinity groups which have dominated the movement for too long.

Anyone who would like to explode the myth that anarchism means chaos is welcome to contact their local ACA group (see back page) for a lively discussion of this and other issues.

Dear FREEDOM

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the recent Manchester conference so I cannot comment on most of Alan Westfall's review that appeared in FREEDOM (last issue). But I would like to take up the point that he makes in that article that many libertarians are forced to work within the Labour Party and SWP because there isn't a worthwhile anarchist alternative.

It was partly for this reason that some of us formed the Anarchist Communist Association about a year ago. Although the ACA is still relatively small in size, we are presently involved in support groups for the Ford strikers and in promoting libertarian ideas generally in our trade unions, various community camp-

Dear Anarchy,

I found the article in your last issue, 'Anarchy in the U.K. - O.K.' very interesting reading, but I ought to write and correct the impressions you give of the Anarchist Communist Association (A.C.A.) in that article.

Firstly you describe the A.C.A., as 'moving in an anarchist direction.' This seems to imply that, in the past, members of the A.C.A., have not been anarchists. This is not true. We have always been class struggle anarchists.

Secondly, you say that the A.C.A., supports FLAG. This is not true either. While A.C.A. members have attended FLAG meetings as observers and we are always happy to co-operate with other people in direct action, we do not believe that very loose federations, like FLAG, are the way to re-build anarchism as a mass movement.

On the contrary, we believe that if anarchism is to prove to be a living and decisive force in the struggle of working people against capitalism and patriarchy, anarchists need to develop a more structured organisation that is capable of giving practical assistance to people in their struggle. Your article on the Firemen's Strike in the same issue shows how necessary this is.

This does not mean organising on a 'neo party basis.' The structure of A.C.A., is firmly based on libertarian principles with autonomous local groups, rotation of tasks, mandation of delegates etc. But it does mean moving away from 'non-organisation' and accepting the need for membership, based on agreement with a set of aims and principles, descriptions and a constitution that is known to everyone.

Anyone interested in discussing these ideas or finding out more can contact us by writing to A.C.A.

aligns and the women's movement. We have also recently started to publish our own monthly paper called Bread and Roses. Belonging to the ACA has helped us to break down our individual isolation and has enabled us to coordinate our activities so as to make a greater impact.

I would, therefore, like to suggest to Alan and others who see a need for a more organised anarchist movement in this country that they consider joining the ACA.

4. HOW WE ARE ORGANISED

The A.C.A. Constitution

As agreed at the constitutional conference of 22/23 October 1977.

1. Groups

- i) The basis of the Association is the small group, centred on workplace, geographical location etc.
- ii) A group must have at least 3 members in order to be able to recruit others.
- iii) Groups may only form by the division of existing groups.
- iv) Each group is autonomous within the framework laid down by the Aims and Principles. Within this framework groups may decide on their own activities, produce their own literature etc. These activities should be undertaken in the name of the group concerned and may not commit the organisation as a whole, unless otherwise decided by delegate or national conference.
- v) Responsibilities of groups are:
 1. To provide a base for the development of the membership.
 2. To co-ordinate and initiate activities.
 3. To spread anarchist ideas within the principles laid down by the Association.
 4. To collect national dues.
 5. To report regularly and fully to the IB.
 6. To maintain contact with all its members and contacts, especially associates.

2. Membership

- i) Membership of the association involves acceptance of the Aims and Principles and Constitution of the Association.
- ii) All members must belong to a group, either as regular or associate members.
- iii) Membership is by invitation of the group which the potential new member is attached to.
- iv) Groups can suspend a member from membership of the group, but only national conference can expel a member from the ACA as a whole. Suspension deprives a member of voting rights. When a national conference is approaching, a group should either lift a suspension or put forward a motion for expulsion. If it does neither the member concerned should appeal to national conference against suspension.
- v) Expulsion of a whole group may be decided by a national or delegate conference, but only following 4 months' dialogue in the IB between the group concerned and other groups/members.

3. Finance

- i) National dues are calculated on a group basis.
- ii) Each group contributes at least 2% of its collective income.
- iii) Division of this amount within each group is decided by the group itself.
- iv) Each group should inform the membership secretary of its contribution and ensure regular payment.

4. Commissions

- i) The role of Commissions is:
 1. To co-ordinate ideas and action on specific topics, e.g. fascism, trade unions.
 2. To produce discussion papers or suggest policy on issues within their competence for the rest of the membership. A commission may not decide policy for the Association as a whole.
- ii) Commissions are set up after proper discussion of the need for them, by delegate conference or national conference, and must have at least 3 members.
- iii) Commissions are expected to report regularly to the IB.

5. Co-Ordination

- i) Co-ordinating functions such as production of the IB and organisation of delegate conferences are rotated round the groups.
- ii) Groups perform these functions for 6 months at a time and are delegated at national conference.

6. National Conference

- i) The National Conference is the supreme decision-making body of the Association.
- ii) It may change decisions taken by Delegate Conference.
- iii) It is the only body able to decide changes in the Aims and Principles or Constitution.
- iv) National Conference elects all national officers of the Association and delegates all co-ordinating groups.
- v) National Conference is held roughly every six months.

7. Delegate Conference

- i) Delegate Conference decides policy and tactics, and issues relating to the general running of the Association.
- ii) It is held roughly every 2 months.
- iii) All groups are expected to send one delegate with mandated votes for that group. Observers may also attend.
- iv) A delegate must represent at least 3 members including her/himself.
- v) The agenda for conference and any motions to be discussed are printed in the IB at least 2 weeks before conference.
- vi) Delegate Conference is subordinate to national conference.

8. Policy And Minority Rights

- i) Official policy of the Association is that which has obtained a 2/3 majority of those represented at Delegate or National Conference.
- ii) Minorities who have voted against such policy, or groups of members acting on an issue for which no official policy exists, have the right to act as they see fit, providing that this is within the Aims and Principles of the Association, and that it is made clear that their position is a minority or unofficial one.

9. Internal Bulletin

- i) The IB is the single most important vehicle of communication within the Association.
- ii) It is produced once a month.
- iii) It is sent to all members and, at the discretion of the group concerned, to contacts.
- iv) All groups, commissions, officers of the Association and members are expected to contribute regularly.
- v) All contributions should reach the IB collective in reasonable time for publication, where possible members and groups themselves producing enough copies of their contribution.
- vi) The responsibility for producing the IB shall change hands roughly every 6 months.

10. National Officers

- i) National Conference should elect a national secretary, a membership secretary and one or more international secretaries as required.
 - ii) No national officer shall keep the same position for more than 6 months.
 - iii) All national officers are subject to recall.
 - iv) In the event of a national officer resigning or being recalled, a provisional officer is appointed by Delcon until next Natcon.
- The responsibilities of the national officers are as follows:

National Secretary

- a) Deal with all internal and national correspondence.
- b) To be responsible for organising of Natcon in an emergency.
- c) To co-opt members in the fulfillment of these tasks if necessary.
- d) To submit to the IB a monthly report on the overall functioning of the organisation and the developments of her/his work.

Treasurer/Membership Secretary

- a) To maintain a record and account of all funds.
- b) To circulate once every 3 months in the IB a record of all income and expenditure, and a statement of membership figures and group dues.

International Secretaries

- a) To make and maintain contact with similar organisations and sympathetic individuals abroad.
- b) To send our publications and news of ACA activity to the above-mentioned.
- c) To report regularly to the IB.
- d) To organise translation from foreign papers and the writing of articles for foreign papers.

Join The A.C.A.

If having read all this you are still awake and wish to join the ACA, please fill out this form and send to Box 2, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.

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Address

Telephone

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